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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran Hamas Iraq

Europe - French Political Crisis

PARIS - Monday, April 10, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran
Hamas
Iraq
Europe - French Political Crisis

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Front pages overwhelmingly see President Chirac as being on the front line as he faces the moment of truth to resolve the CPE (youth employment plan) crisis. After meeting early this morning with the President, PM Villepin gave a press conference at 10:30 local time. He announced the "withdrawal of article 8" which in essence is the withdrawal of the CPE, and announced a new set of measures to help youth employment, which should result from negotiations between the government and the unions. Before the announcement Le Figaro's editorial entitled "A State of Emergency for the Right of Law" raised the problem of "who is at the helm." (See Part C) PM Villepin will be on the 8PM TF1 newscast.

International news is dominated by Hamas and Iran. The weekend editorial in Le Figaro envisions a "strategy towards Hamas" while Monday's Le Monde titles its editorial: "Hamas Punished." (See Part C) Both Le Figaro and Liberation report on the U.S. press reports that the Bush administration is planning air strikes against Iran. (See Part C) Le Figaro notes that according to a report drafted by American officials in Baghdad and made public by the New York Times, "the situation in Iraq is much more dire than the Bush Administration lets on." (See Part C)

La Croix's Question of the Day is devoted to Hamas: "Can Hamas govern without international aid?" Judeh Markous, the Tourism Minister of the Palestinian Authority says: "Without such aid, the region is going towards a catastrophe. The international community must respect our democratic choice. The government is not set against negotiating with Israel. But before that it must receive some assurance that it will be treated fairly. If Israel clearly says it is ready to grant us our rights, we are ready to negotiate."

Le Journal du Dimanche carries a full-page report based on an interview with Huthayfah Azzam, the son of the man who invented global Jihad and Al-Qaeda. His first target is to get Zarkaoui to relinquish his role as leader of the Iraqi resistance.

In economic news, Airbus's difficulties are front-paged in La Tribune: "BAE Systems has sacrificed Airbus on the altar of its American expansion" adding: "BAE's announcement came at the same time as the Pentagon's decision to begin the production of the F-35, a project coordinated by Lockheed Martin and subcontracted to BAE."

Les Echos carries a full-page interview with the Director General of the WTO Pascal Lamy. Asked if he thinks that the trade negotiations have a chance of succeeding between now and April 30, Lamy answers: "The principal actors in the trade negotiations: the U.S., the EU and the G20 all have a thorn in their sides. The U.S. needs to make an effort on farm subsidies, the EU on customs and the G20 on tariffs applied to importing industrial products."

Harlan Watson, senior climate negotiator for the Department of State, is interviewed in Saturday's Le Figaro under the title "'No more censure' by NASA on the climate." Questioned about allegations NASA scientists were prohibited from giving their personal opinions on climate change, Watson says, "From what I understand, from now on, scientists can say what they want as long as it is presented as their own point of view. John Marburger (scientific counselor to the White House) has presented his apologies and stated that this will not be

repeated. There will be no more censure." Asked about Kyoto, he says, "The U.S. can only accept to sign a treaty on the condition that China and India accept precise objectives. However, the emerging countries are very clear on this point: constraining obligations. are unacceptable in their eyes. The next Administration will be free to change its opinion."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran

"Bush Ready to Strike Iran"

Laurent Mauriac in left-of-center Liberation (04/10): "On Thursday, John Bolton threatened Iran with economic sanctions. Unofficially, other options, military for the most part, are also under study. At least according to the New York Times. and despite the author's (Seymour Hersh) renowned hostility to Bush. According to officials quoted by the NY Times and the Washington Post, the U.S. Air Force is drafting a list of possible targets. including nuclear strikes on Natanz. While the White House has not denied these accusations, it has insisted that it prefers to go down the diplomatic road. What exactly does President Bush want? In the past he has reiterated that a military attack cannot be completely disregarded. According to Hersh's Pentagon sources, Bush wants to topple the Iranian regime. And what do the Europeans think of all this? After two years of diplomacy, the negotiations between Iran and the EU-3 have failed. But says a French diplomat: 'For us, a military option is out of the question.' What are the risks of the U.S. approach? According to two experts, James Dobbins of the Rand Corporation and Ray Takeyh, of the Council on Foreign Relations, 'the U.S. should realize that threatening Iran. can only strengthen the more reactionary forces in the country.' The concordance of views in the two articles, the Post and the Times, would indicate that the Bush administration is opting for deterrence and hopes to influence Iran by using threats. But the Iranian regime, which is betting on a divided international community, could rejoice if three separate camps were to emerge: a bellicose U.S., an accommodating Russia, and between the two, a Europe using the carrot and the stick with obvious difficulty."

"New American Threats on Iran"

Delphine Minoui in right-of-center Le Figaro (04/10): "The debate over the use of force against Iran has surfaced anew. Two major American papers state that a military option, including targeted nuclear strikes, are being considered by the Bush administration in case the diplomatic option fails."

Hamas

"Hamas Punished"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (04/10): "In announcing, together but separate, the suspension of their aid to the Palestinian Authority, the Americans and the Europeans want to pressure the Palestinian government, led by Hamas, to recognize the State of Israel, give up violence and accept the peace process as defined in Oslo. Hamas was democratically elected, and as the Americans have said, such elections can sometime give undesirable results. But the Palestinian Authority is being maintained alive through an IV of financial aid administered by the international community. To cut this aid means to add hardship to the Palestinian population. This is why the Americans, like the Europeans, are not touching what is earmarked as 'humanitarian' aid. There is also the risk that Hamas turn to other financial sources, such as Iran. But the West needs to consult and to agree on its declarations. They cannot continue to finance a movement which is still on the list of terrorist groups, and which has not, to date, given any reason to be removed from it. Western policy cannot resign itself to this 'punishment.' It should engage in discreet contacts with the new Palestinian government to negotiate with Israel. And the new Israeli government must give up unilateral decisions in favor of a negotiated solution. The Europeans and even more so the Americans, have the power to convince them, if they so desire."

"A Strategy for Hamas"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (04/08): "Neither Washington nor Brussels has still been able to define a clear strategy in the new configuration born of the January elections in the Palestinian legislative council. In appearance, the objective aims to make Hamas evolve, hoping that it will become a moderate movement capable of living in peace side by side with Israel. Otherwise said, one is asking Hamas to stop being Hamas. It is based on an illusion. Hamas itself has a strategy. It consists in winning time to garner all the benefits that its electoral triumph can bring it. At the hour when, in the U.S. and in Israel, some dream of precipitating the failure of a Hamas government, it is time for Europe to define a true strategy vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority. How far is one willing to go to counter the Islamists? What incentives can one offer to push them truly to change?"

Iraq

"U.S. Report Sounds the Alarm in Iraq"

Arnaud de La Grange in right-of-center Le Figaro (04/10): "It would appear that between Baghdad and Washington there is much lost information. A report drafted by U.S. officials in Iraq seems to be giving a picture of the situation which is much more dire than the one delivered by the Bush administration. The report also states as fact the country's division into ethnic and religious entities. It also sends out a warning about religious armed conflicts in parts of Iraq categorized as peaceful by U.S. officials. This unofficial analysis agrees with the view adopted by Hosni Mubarak on Saturday and who states that 'Iraq is in the grips of a civil war.' Mubarak also warned that Iran's influence on Shiites in the Arab world was growing."

Europe - French Political Crisis

"A State of Emergency for the Right of Law"

Yves Threard in right-of-center Le Figaro (04/10): "Who does what? This is the question everyone is asking in France. Rarely has the authority of the state been so undermined. From a social crisis, we have gone to a political crisis that may turn into a regime crisis if no solution is found quickly. Our country has already been humiliated. Without a solution the situation will be catastrophic. It is difficult to see where the logic lies, except to see that the rivalry between Villepin and Sarkozy is responsible for much of today's inconsistencies. This week will be crucial. The law must have the last word. And the President must show the way." STAPLETON